

Step 3: Score Conclusion

Score the Conclusion using the following rules:

- 0 points:** If no thesis statement is provided, score Conclusion 0 points and move on to scoring Paragraphs.
- 1 point:** If the end of the essay includes a thesis statement (a complete sentence that includes the name of a game and expresses fondness for it), the score for Conclusion is at least 1 point.
- If you didn't notice any restatement of reasons when you read through the essay, the score for Conclusion remains 1 point, and you can move on to scoring Paragraphs.
- 2 points:** The score for Conclusion is 2 points if the student summarized his/her reasons in the conclusion by restating key words.
- If, on your initial read through, you noticed that the student attempted to restate his/her reasons in the conclusion, check to see whether each reason in the conclusion includes 1 or more of the same key words as the reasons in the body of the essay. If so, score Conclusion 2 points.

Step 4: Score Paragraphs

Score Paragraphs using the following rules:

- Count the number of paragraphs in the essay. Each paragraph = 1 point (max = 5 points).
 - ▶ If there is only one block of text, it can be counted as 1 paragraph as long as it contains at least 2 punctuation marks, each following a different statement.
 - ▶ If there are multiple blocks of text, each one (up to 5) can be counted as a paragraph as long as they:
 - include at least 2 punctuation marks, each following a different statement (in other words, the paragraph must have at least 2 statements, but those statements could be complete sentences, fragments, and/or run-on sentences), and
 - are separated from each other using either indentation or line spacing.

Step 5: Score Transitions

Score Transitions using the following rules:

- Do not reread the essay.
- Find every ending punctuation mark. Circle any word that comes after an ending punctuation mark if it is in the *List of Acceptable Transitions* provided at the end of this document.

Tip: You will quickly develop a mental list of words that are commonly used but **do not** receive credit (e.g., “There are,” “And,” “But”).
- Each circled word = 1 point for Transitions (max = 5 points).
 - ▶ If the same transition was used more than once, only count it once.

Step 6: Find Reasons Why

Find all the reasons why the student likes the game.

In the following discussion, A–H correspond to A–H in the section of the Scoring Guide for scoring Reasons Why and Elaborations.

Tip: Identify **every** reason in the essay (even though the maximum score for Reasons Why is 3). This allows you to give credit for all possible elaborations in Step 8.

Go through the essay with a highlighter and **highlight the flags** described below; these flags signal the most common ways that students present reasons:

A. Key words in the body of the essay that were restated in the Introduction and/or Conclusion (you would have already found these in Step 2)

- Highlight each independent clause or complete sentence that includes a key word.

B. The topic sentence of a paragraph

- If the essay is only 1 paragraph, skip B.
- If the essay includes 2 or more paragraphs, look at the first sentence **of all but the first paragraph**.
 - ▶ Highlight the sentence if it is a complete thought that summarizes the information presented in that paragraph. If it is a run-on, highlight the first independent clause only (credit is still given for a run-on topic sentence).

C. Bulleted/Numbered lists

- Highlight each bulleted or numbered statement that is an independent clause or complete sentence.
- Highlight each bulleted or numbered statement that forms an independent clause or complete sentence when joined with a carrier phrase. Treat each one as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

D. Enumerative words/phrases that specify number or order (e.g., one, two, three; first, second, third; finally, last, next)

- Highlight each clause or sentence that includes an enumerative word or phrase.
 - ▶ If the statement including the enumerative word or phrase clearly refers to a clause or complete sentence next to it, highlight that as well (e.g., This leads me to my first reason. My family loves it.). Treat as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

E. The word “reason” or “reasons”

- Highlight each clause or complete sentence that includes the word “reason” or “reasons.”
 - ▶ Each usage of the word should be treated as one reason when scoring in Step 7 (e.g., The reasons I like it are that it’s fun and interesting and challenging = 1 reason).
 - ▶ If the statement including the word “reason” or “reasons” clearly refers to a clause or complete sentence next to it, highlight that as well (e.g., You get to use chips. That is the reason I like bingo.). Treat as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

F. The phrase “that is (that’s) why” or “this is why”

- Highlight each clause or complete sentence that includes the phrase “that is (that’s) why” or “this is why.”
 - ▶ If the statement including the phrase “that is (that’s) why” or “this is why” clearly refers to a clause or complete sentence next to it, highlight that as well (e.g., You get to use chips. That is why I like bingo). Treat as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

G. Superlatives (e.g., best, favorite, most, coolest, biggest, fastest, greatest, etc.)

- Highlight each clause or complete sentence that uses a superlative to express praise for the game. (Do **not** highlight negative superlatives like worst, dumbest, etc.)
 - ▶ If the statement including a superlative clearly refers to a clause or complete sentence next to it, highlight that as well (e.g., You get to use chips. That is the best). Treat as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

H. Additive conjunctions other than “and” (e.g., also, in addition, another, the other, as well as, furthermore, plus, too)

- Highlight each clause or complete sentence that includes an additive conjunction other than “and.”
 - ▶ If the statement including the additive conjunction other than “and” clearly refers to a clause or complete sentence next to it, highlight that as well (e.g., The game has many levels. This is *also* a reason why it’s fun.). Treat as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

I. The word “because”

- Highlight each time the word “because” is used. Only highlight the word “because”—don’t highlight the rest of the sentence. Refer to Steps 7 and 8 to determine how to score.

Step 7: Score Reasons Why

Score Reasons Why using the following rules:

- All highlighted statements are scored as *reasons why*. Score each reason 1 point (max = 3 points).
- If you highlighted the word “because” as a flag, you need to determine if the statement is a reason or an elaboration by following these rules:
 - ▶ If the word “because” immediately follows a highlighted reason, it’s being used as an elaboration. Do **not** score it as a reason. Score it as an elaboration in Step 8.
 - ▶ All other statements that include the word “because” are scored as reasons. Highlight the rest of the sentence that includes the word “because” to indicate that it’s a reason. Score each reason 1 point (max = 3 points).

Step 8: Score Elaborations

Score **Elaborations** using the following rules:

- Underline each independent clause or sentence that immediately follows a highlighted reason and is **not** a contrasting statement. Score each 1 point (max = 3 points).

Tip: Contrasting statements include words like *although, yet, however*.

- Underline each dependent clause beginning with “because” that immediately follows a highlighted reason. Score each 1 point (max = 3 points).

Step 9: Score Remaining Reasons Why

Score **Any Remaining Reasons** using the following rules:

- If the essay has fewer than 3 reasons, and you highlighted additive conjunctions, you may be able to give credit for more reasons (max = 3 points).
 - ▶ Students often use additive conjunctions (e.g., also, in addition, too) to present additional reasons, so the statement just before a reason with an additive conjunction might also be a reason (e.g., You get to hit the ball. It helps you build endurance *too*. = 2 reasons why).
 - ▶ Look at the highlighted reasons that include an additive conjunction other than “and.” If there is an independent clause or complete sentence immediately preceding any of these reasons that is not highlighted, you can highlight and score that clause/sentence as a reason as well.

Step 10: Check Score

Quickly check your scoring using the following guidelines:

1. Make sure the first word of the essay does **not** receive credit as a Transition in Step 5 (see *List of Acceptable Transitions* provided at the end of this document).
2. Make sure each reason is a complete thought. If it is not, do **not** give it credit.
3. Make sure each reason is different (repetitions of the same reason do not get credit).
4. Make sure each reason and elaboration is not just a restatement of the thesis. Restatements of the thesis statement do not get credit as reasons or elaborations (e.g., I like Soccer. It’s my favorite game because I like it.).
5. Make sure the first sentence of a paragraph is **not** scored as an elaboration. An elaboration **must** immediately follow a reason to get credit.
6. Make sure the Elaborations score does **not** exceed the Reasons Why score.

Frequently Asked Questions About Score Interpretation

1. What makes a high-scoring essay?

The following 6 features:

- 5 paragraphs
- An introduction that includes a thesis statement and summarizes the reasons that will be presented; reasons are most effectively summarized for the reader by restating one or more of the same key words
- Use of transitions to show relationships between ideas
- 3 or more reasons to support the thesis statement
- 1 or more elaborations to support each reason
- A conclusion that summarizes the reasons presented; reasons are most effectively summarized for the reader by restating one or more of the same key words

Tip: Remember that scores for this subtest are based upon a first draft written in 10 minutes.

2. How do I interpret the Essay Composition scores?

Compare the student's performance in each of the following areas to evaluate strengths and weaknesses:

Grammar and Mechanics

Evaluate the Grammar and Mechanics supplemental score. A low score may indicate weaknesses in the areas of grammar, spelling, capitalization, and/or punctuation.

Tip: Also consider using correct minus incorrect word sequences (CIWS) within curriculum-based measures as a progress monitoring tool.

Content and Organization

To interpret the Essay Composition (Content and Organization) subtest score, compare the score for Word Count with the score for Theme Development and Text Organization. Using the scoring software, these scores are reported separately in the Subtest Component Score Summary table. Reporting these scores separately allows you to compare productivity (measured by Word Count) with Theme Development and Text Organization in order to identify specific skill strengths and weaknesses and to focus instruction accordingly.

A low Word Count score indicates a weakness in written productivity, whereas a low Theme Development and Text Organization score indicates difficulties in organizing and presenting ideas in written form. Note that these scores are **not** designed to measure grammar or mechanics.

As with any subtest or composite score, if there is a discrepancy between the scores that contribute to a subtest or composite, then the subtest or composite score may mask weaknesses. If the Essay Composition subtest produces discrepant scores, reporting the subtest component scores to describe discrepancies is advised. For example, if a student writes an essay that is very productive (high Word Count score) but lacking in content and quality (low Theme Development and Text Organization score), the overall subtest score may mask the student's skill weaknesses. In this case, it is important to describe the student's performance using the subtest component scores for Word Count and Theme Development and Text Organization.

List of Acceptable Transitions

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. | Despite | In sum/summary/summation | On the whole | Then |
| A further | Doubtless | In the (season of the year) | On top of that | Thereafter |
| A second/third/etc. | Due to | In the end | Once | Therefore |
| A similar | During | In the first place | One | These are/were |
| Above all | Earlier | In the future/past | Ordinarily | Third |
| Additionally | Equally important | In the meantime | Other | This also means |
| After | Especially | In the same manner/way | Otherwise | This concludes |
| Afterward(s) | Even | In the second place | Overall | This is/can |
| Again | Eventually | In truth | Particularly | This/That means |
| All in all | Ever since | Incidentally | Perhaps | Those are/were |
| All these reasons | Fifth | Indeed | Plus | Though |
| Also | Finally | Instead | Possibly | Thus |
| Alternatively | First(ly) | It follows that | Presently | To begin with |
| Although | For example/instance | It is true | Previously | To conclude |
| Altogether | For one (thing) | It seems | Probably | To do this |
| An additional | For that/these/this/those | Just as | Provided that | To doubt that |
| An example | Formerly | Last(ly) | Rarely | To explain |
| Another | Fourth | Lately | Rather | To illustrate |
| As a consequence/result | Frequently | Later | Recently | To put it another way |
| As an example | Further/Furthermore | Like | Regardless | To put it differently |
| As I said/have shown | Generally | Likewise | Remarkably | To start with |
| As long as | Given | Maybe | Right now | To sum (it) up |
| As soon as | Granted | Meanwhile | Second(ly) | To summarize |
| As well as | Hence | Moreover | Shortly | To this end |
| As you can see | Here is/are | Most important(ly) | Similarly | Today |
| At first | However | Most of all | Simultaneously | Tomorrow |
| At last | Immediately | Most of the time | Since | Truly |
| At that time/point | Importantly | My first/second/third/etc. | So far | Typically |
| At the same time | In (my) conclusion | My last/final/concluding | So that | Ultimately |
| At times | In addition | Namely | Sometimes | Unless |
| Basically | In any case/event | Naturally | Soon | Unlike |
| Because | In brief | Nevertheless/Nonetheless | Specifically | Until |
| Before | In case | Next | Still | Usually |
| Besides | In contrast | Not only | Subsequently | When |
| Best of all | In fact | Now | Surely | Whenever |
| Beyond | In general | Obviously | That is | Whereas |
| Certainly | In order to/for | Occasionally | The final/last/concluding | While |
| Clearly | In other words | Of course | The first/second/third/etc. | Without (a) doubt |
| Consequently | In particular | Often (times) | The main | Worst of all |
| Contrarily | In short | On one hand/the other hand | The next | Yesterday |
| Conversely | In simpler terms | On the contrary | The other | Yet another |
| Currently | In spite of | | | |